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REVIEW OF THE BOOK *ANA PAUKER: THE RISE AND FALL OF A JEWISH COMMUNIST* BY ROBERT LEVY

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Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 406 pp. \$ 35.00.

Reviewed by Robert Weiner, University of Massachusetts at Boston

Ana Pauker, the legendary “Iron Lady” of Romania, was the unofficial leader of the Romanian Communist Party immediately after World War II. She was appointed foreign minister in 1947 and also served as deputy minister of agriculture. Using newly available archival material, Robert Levy paints a generally sympathetic portrait of Pauker as the epitome of socialism with a human face. Although Levy is aware that vital documentary evidence may have been tampered with and destroyed, his assessment is much more favorable than the accounts in conventional Western and Romanian historiography during both the Communist era and the post-Communist period, which depicted Pauker as a Stalinist monster.

Pauker was born on 13 December 1893 in what is now Moldova, the granddaughter of a rabbi. Levy makes a great deal out of her Jewish background as he discusses the historical and political circumstances in turn-of-the-century Romania that gave rise to anti-Semitism. These circumstances were the backdrop for the formation of Pauker's contradictory nature. Levy argues that anti-Semitism in Romania helped motivate Pauker to become a revolutionary personality. In her early years as a dedicated and precocious Communist, she worked in the Latin section of the Communist International (Comintern), the organization set up by the Soviet Union to bind the world's Communist parties together under Soviet domination. Pauker was a graduate of the Comintern Lenin school in Moscow, where she excelled in her studies.

In 1935 Pauker was sent by Moscow back to royalist Romania, where she was arrested. At her trial in 1936 she received a prison sentence of ten years. The Soviet authorities valued her so much at the time that they arranged a prisoner exchange in 1941, securing her release and safe passage to Moscow.

Levy refutes the myth that Pauker was such a repulsive creature that she actually denounced her own husband, Marcel Pauker (whom she had married in 1921), resulting in his execution during the Soviet purges in 1938. According to Levy, Pauker actually was terrified of the Soviet leader, Josif Stalin, and apparently never knew the fate of her husband.

The central part of Levy's thesis is that Pauker's downfall in 1952 was not due *solely* to a struggle for power between Pauker's pro-Moscow wing of the party and the “native” or domestic wing led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, contrary to conventional historical explanations. Levy argues that her ouster was the result of genuine ideological differences between the two factions, whose ranks were not always clear as individuals shifted back and forth between the two camps. Levy also demonstrates that Pauker's removal from power was due to pressure from Stalin, pressure that gave Gheorghiu-Dej the opportunity to consolidate his position. The Soviet leader wanted to stage-manage the anti-Titoist show trials in Romania in the same way that he oversaw the purges elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

Pauker was arrested on 18 February 1953 and was accused of being a “right-wing deviationist” and “bourgeois nationalist,” among other things. The charges leveled against her covered a number of issues, such as allowing “careerists” and “opportunists” to join the Communist Party in the mass recruitment campaign that was undertaken immediately after the war. She also was accused of trying to protect Lucretiu Patrascanu, a leading Communist intellectual and rival of Gheorghiu-Dej. Patrascanu was charged with counterrevolutionary activities and treason and was executed in 1954, six years after he had been arrested. The case against Pauker also rested on her opposition to the terror tactics employed against peasants during the collectivization of agriculture and “dekulakization,” a point also made by Ghita Ionescu in his classic study of Romanian Communism. Pauker condemned the use of brutal coercive methods and advocated gradual collectivization until the country had become sufficiently mechanized. After her arrest she was accused of being a “peasantist” and “non-Marxist” (p. 200). Pauker also found herself at odds with the Stalinist line that called for the purge of the “Spaniards,” the Romanians who had fought with the Republican forces in the Spanish civil war (most of whom were Jewish) and who were later branded by the Soviet Union as Titoists.

Most important of all, according to Levy, Pauker by 1952 was caught up in a broader anti-Zionist campaign unleashed by Stalin. The more traditional historical view has been that her removal was not motivated by anti-Semitism. Historians who subscribe to this view have pointed out that when she was removed as foreign minister in 1952, she was replaced by Simion Bughici, who was Jewish. They also have noted that other Jews continued to occupy key positions in Romanian politics. Levy argues, however, that the campaign against Pauker was indeed anti-Semitic. She had defied the Stalinist line on Jewish emigration to Israel in 1949. Furthermore, there apparently was some truth to the rumor that Pauker's brother, Zalman Rabinsohn, who had emigrated to Palestine in 1944, served as a channel of communication between her (dubbed the “Empress” by David Ben-Gurion) and the Israeli government on the issue of emigration. (She also pulled some strings to allow her father to emigrate to Israel.) This allegation was used in the purge to corroborate charges brought against Pauker that she was linked to an international Zionist conspiracy and to Western intelligence services as well.

Pauker engaged in self-criticism after her arrest but never confessed to being an agent. She was spared from undergoing a show trial by Stalin's death in March 1953 and lived with her daughter until she died in 1960.

In the final analysis, Levy argues that Pauker was a Stalinist who opposed the Stalinist line and in that sense was a reformer whose downfall in 1952 condemned Romania to years of neo-Stalinism in the form of the bizarre personality cult constructed by Nicolae Ceaușescu. A gap in Levy's analysis is worth noting: Given Romania's later efforts to stake out an autonomous foreign policy, it would have been interesting if Levy had spent some time investigating the more substantive foreign policy issues that Pauker dealt with as foreign minister.